

Changing the big gun

Maj. Daniel C. Kane

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SYRACUSE, N.Y. — January 23 was just another day in the Corps for tank maintenance Marines from Company B and Headquarters and Service Detachment, 8th Tank Battalion, 4th Marine Division, Syracuse, N.Y., who completed a task rarely accomplished by active duty units, let alone a reserve unit.

They removed and replaced the 120 mm main gun of an M — 1A1 Abrams

tank at their own reserve center. After six hours of preparation, they were able to gently remove the 2,502-pound main gun with the help of the boom from their M — 88 Tank Retriever and good old Marine muscle.

Under the watchful eye of local TV news cameras, Gunnery Sgt. Richard Tirado, maintenance chief, 8th Tank Bn., 4th Mar. Div., supervised the operation making it look like an everyday event.

Making the event even more unique

were the 25 degrees below zero wind chills recorded that day in the Syracuse, N.Y., area. Only seen as a minor inconvenience by the Marines, the local media were impressed enough to give Syracuse Marines their lead stories that night.

Due to the cold weather, most of the Syracuse area residents were locked up in their homes leaving the news media with nothing but the Marines to cover.

During a routine inspection, the



Photo by Maj. Daniel C. Kane

Marines from Co. B and Headquarters and Service Co., 8th Tank Bn., Syracuse, N.Y., spent a drill weekend replacing the 120 MM main gun of an M — 1A1 Abrams tank. With the help of an M — 88 boom, the Marines close in on completing the job.



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original gun tube was found to have a crack in it. Knowing that one of the company's other tanks was being sent to Albany, Ga., for reconditioning, tank maintenance personnel got permission to exchange the good gun tube from that tank for the one that had the cracked gun tube.

This saved the Marine Corps thousands of dollars in

shipping costs for a new gun tube and maintained unit readiness. The cost of a new gun tube is over \$100,000.

While not normally done at a reserve training center, Tirado said, "With a gun tube limit of 1,500 EFC's (effective full charge), this is the first one done here on an M1A1 Tank, and the Devil Dogs performed a textbook gun tube replacement."

Located in Mattydale, N.Y., just north of Syracuse, Co. B is one of four tank companies from 8th Tank Battalion, which is headquartered in Rochester, N.Y. Collocated with Co. B is the Headquarters and Service Co. Det., which is composed of the Battalion tank maintenance section and other Battalion support personnel. Company B (Rein) is commanded by Capt. Daniel O'Leary of central New York.

Together, tank maintenance for Company B and H&S Det. total 15 Marines, all of whom had a hand in the accomplishment of the mission.

Due to the successful drill weekend, Marines of Co. B were able return to their families proud of a mission completed.



Photo by Maj. Daniel C. Kane

The Marines make the final adjustments to the 120 mm main gun as it eases into its place on the tank.